



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Civil Rights

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Washington, DC
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TO: All ASCR Employees

FROM: Margo M. McKay
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

Margo M. McKay

AUG 22 2007

SUBJECT: Amendment to ASCR Directive "Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Web Site Policies and Procedures"

This memorandum amends the ASCR Directive "Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Web Site Policies and Procedures" dated July 1, 2005 (Directive).

A recent Office of Management and Budget (OMB) policy requires agencies to establish and enforce a policy for linking to information on Federal government Web sites and non-Federal government Web sites. Additionally, ASCR employees and customers have expressed an interest in linking to information on non-Federal government Web sites. To comply with the OMB requirement and to meet the needs of our employees and customers, section 4.k of the Directive, which prohibits external links to information on non-governmental or private sector Web sites, is amended to permit such links.

Section 4.k of the Directive is hereby amended, by deleting the existing section and replacing it with the following:

- k. External links to information on non-Federal or private sector Web sites must be consistent with ASCR's Linking Policy that is attached to this Directive.

A copy of ASCR's Linking Policy is attached to this Memorandum and is available in ASCR's Web site Policies and Links, in the footer of the ASCR Homepage.

Attachment

ASCR Web Site Linking Policy

As a service to our customers, ASCR's Web site links to other Federal agencies and in some instances, private organizations, when these outside sites provide appropriate information unavailable from ASCR or USDA. Links will go directly to useful pages, not necessarily to organizational home pages.

Criteria

ASCR Web team evaluates all outside links using the following criteria:

- Is the recommended Web site an official government-owned or supported Web site?
- Does the recommended Web site provide official government information or services?
- Does the recommended Web site complement existing information or services on the ASCR Web site?
- Is the recommended Web site accessible and applicable to a wide audience?
- Is the recommended Web site's content relevant, useful, and authoritative for USDA or ASCR customers?
- Does the recommended Web site's information appear timely, accurate, current, and complete?
- Is the recommended Web site's approach to the privacy of personal information consistent with the government's privacy and security policies?
- Is the recommended Web site "user-friendly?"
- Does the recommended Web site conflict with USDA's and ASCR's obligation to maintain objectivity.

Frequency of Review

ASCR Web team reviews all external links quarterly to determine if the link remains active or otherwise continues to provide the level of quality (including objectivity, utility and integrity) as intended by ASCR and expected by users.

Disclaimer of Endorsement

When users select a link to an outside Web site, they are leaving the ASCR Web site and are subject to the privacy and security policies of the owners/sponsors of the outside Web site.

- ASCR **does not** control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of information on a linked Web site.
- ASCR **does not** endorse the organizations sponsoring these Web sites and we do not endorse the views they express or the products or services they offer.
- ASCR **cannot** authorize the use of copyrighted materials on linked Web sites. Users must request such authorization directly from the sponsor of the linked Web site.
- From time to time, the ASCR Web site may host material from outside organizations. In these instances, ASCR requests written permission for all external information we host.
- ASCR is **not responsible** for transmissions users receive from linked Web sites.
- ASCR **does not** guarantee that outside Web sites comply with Section 508 (Accessibility Requirements) of the Rehabilitation Act.

ASCR will display the following disclaimer when users leave the ASCR Web site by linking to an outside Web site:

Note: You are now leaving the ASCR Web site. Thank you for visiting our Web site. We welcome your comments on how we can make this site more useful. You are linking to another location that is not maintained by USDA, ASCR or any Federal government agency. USDA, ASCR, or any Federal government agency takes no responsibility for and exercises no control over sites that are not maintained by them and are not responsible for the views that may be represented, or the accuracy, privacy policies, copyright or trademark compliance, or the legality of any material contained on those sites.

Links to Government Web Sites

ASCR may link to any publicly available government Web site unless directed not to by the agency that owns the site. Acceptable federal government-owned or government-sponsored Web site domains include .gov, .mil, and .fed.us. ASCR also links to quasi-government agencies and Web sites created by public sector/private sector partnerships, state and local government sites (for example, State departments of agriculture).

Links to Non-Government Web Sites

ASCR may link to Web sites that are not government-owned or government-sponsored if these Web sites provide information and/or services in a way that is not available on an official government Web site. ASCR provides these non-government Web sites as a public service only, and neither endorses nor guarantees in any way the external organizations, services, advice, or products included in these Web site links. Furthermore, ASCR neither controls nor guarantees the accuracy, timeliness or completeness of the information contained in these Web site links. (See Disclaimer of Endorsement above for more information on this topic.)

Reciprocal Links

ASCR links to government information according to our linking policy, whether or not the other Web site links to us. We don't engage in reciprocal linking. We invite any Web site to link to USA.gov, the U.S. government's official portal, USDA.gov, U.S. Department of Agriculture's official portal, or to our Web site, ascr.usda.gov. These are public domain Web sites, which means users may link to us at no cost and without permission.

Prohibitions

ASCR will not link to any Web site that exhibits hate, bias, or discrimination. Furthermore, ASCR reserves the right to deny or remove any link that contains misleading information or unsubstantiated claims, or conflicts with USDA's or ASCR'S mission or policies.